

Педагогічні науки/6. Соціальна педагогіка

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EFFECTIVE ADULT LEARNING IN THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF CONTEMPORARY MARKET ECONOMY

The article gives the essential data on how the countries of the European Union have reacted to some competence essentials as for transition to an open market economy in the circumstances of the growing impact of the global knowledge on the contemporary economy. The developments and changes in adult learning in the countries of the European Union are rendered in details due to the vivid description of the transition experience of the countries of the European Union and the adult education policy responses adopted by their governments provided by useful insights for Europe.

Adult Education in Europe has its own history and tradition. The focal point is on conveying democratic competence. In addition to information about the framework of the state and society, this also includes the qualification for personal engagement on behalf of the state and society.

Most profound investigators and researchers in the sphere of adult education in Europe have come to the conclusion that when conducting adult education the following aspects should be taken into consideration:

Adults are relevancy-oriented. They must see a reason for learning something. Learning has to be applicable to their work or other responsibilities to be of value to them. Therefore, instructors must identify objectives for adult participants before the course begins.

Adults are autonomous and self-directed. They need to be free to direct themselves. Their teachers must actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators for them.

Adults are practical, focusing on the aspects of a lesson most useful to them in their work. They may not be interested in knowledge for its own sake.

Adults are goal-oriented. Upon enrolling in a course, they usually know what goal they want to attain.

Another important aspect of adult learning is motivation. The following six factors serve as sources of motivation for adult learning.

Social relationships: to make new friends, to meet a need for associations and friendships.

External expectations: to comply with instructions from someone else; to fulfill the expectations or recommendations of someone with formal authority.

Social welfare: to improve ability to serve mankind, prepare for service to the community, and improve ability to participate in community work.

Escape/Stimulation: to relieve boredom, provide a break in the routine of home or work, and provide a contrast to other exacting details of life.

Personal advancement: to achieve higher status in a job, secure professional advancement, and stay abreast of competitors.

Cognitive interest: to learn for the sake of learning, seek knowledge for its own sake, and to satisfy an inquiring mind.

Adult Education in Europe has brought about extraordinary things. The exchange of experiences and best practices between European countries is to be accepted.

The EU encourages this by maintaining contacts and activities in the sphere of education which stretch out across borders and are almost always achieved by mutual interest and accompanied by the taking up of interesting ideas.

In Europe in which social and civic contacts across borders are routine, the requirements are of course present for imparting knowledge of positive experiences with citizenship education in other countries, which can in turn implement these as a source of encouragement and an enrichment of their own practices.

On the contrary, Adult Education of one country can also undoubtedly learn from the traditions, customs and different approaches in other countries and develop further.

Most adult education in Europe takes place in colleges of further education (FE) or universities providing higher education (HE). Many FE colleges now propose HE courses.

The stress in FE is in skills and vocational qualification. Publicly funded non-vocational education has traditionally been led by local government working with a 'safeguarded' budget.

Further Education and Higher Education have vivid quality assurance systems and institutions, nevertheless the basic principles are similar in both cases. In Higher Education, quality is overlooked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), created in 1997, and owned and managed by the Universities themselves.

In Further Education it is the responsibility of the Office for Standards in Education (OSE) - which is also in charge of quality assurance in schools and children's services). Most programs in publicly created institutions are described in outcome terms and these definitions are used in determining their quality.

In Higher Education, outcomes are evaluated by institutions as part of an affirmation process carried out with external specialists when courses are designed.

In Further Education, however, they are commonly characterized by external Awarding Bodies, often in cooperation with employers. Personal learner performance is then carried out through testing and examination against those specifications. Activities are currently in progress to enlarge the effect on employers over the specification of qualifications through Sector Skills Councils.

Most teachers in Further Education are well experienced in their sphere, and many of them have undertaken definite roles as supervisors, mentors or workplace trainers before starting on their formal training as teachers. When they embark formal training for national teaching qualifications, most of them are already employed as full-time or part-time FE teachers.

There are particular problems about getting teaching qualifications on the large body of part-time teachers in higher education, and work is in progress in HEA to understand these messages, and develop necessary answers. The Academy has determined a typology of part-time teachers, with each category having particular training needs:

- Fractional teaching staff who have the same title and access to the opportunities and infrastructure as full-time colleagues have.
- Part-time teachers play a very limited role
- Inexperienced teachers as new staff in the HEI deployed to suggest defined narrow data to teaching (e.g. with definite technical or specialized subject facility)
- Inexperienced teachers already present in the HEI (often postgraduate students) are ready to offer proper narrow data to teaching.
- Inexperienced or experienced part-time teachers who yearn to carrying out all forms of teaching activity (but who also may have competing commitments)
- Experienced part-time teachers who have other responsibilities which place limitation on their accessibility and who wish to undertake a restrictive set of teaching roles.

In the Private Training Organization (PTO) department, subject qualifications of teaching and teaching coordinated staff differ from an apprenticeship to postgraduate qualifications. Teaching qualifications have a tendency to be within a narrow range - the City and Guilds Stage 1 and 2 qualification or the level 3/4 learning and development (L&D) awards. LLUK is currently overlooking the conversion of the old Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) components to accommodate to the new requirements for teaching in FE.

The ways to solve the main problems of adult education .

The main push factor that justifies giving much more importance to policy development and transforming adult learning is the impact of transition, set against a backdrop of the global knowledge economy.

Transition means that the demand for new competences is widespread and not limited to certain sectors or skill levels, although there is a gradual shift to higher skills. Adult learning provision must be able to identify and address skill mismatches, shortages and deficits at all levels and of all types. It must be much more market-oriented.

Meeting the wide range of skills needed for the open market and ensuring that people

are employable is a daunting challenge for countries and territories in South Eastern

Europe. This is the case not least because of the broad scope of adult learning and the numbers involved, but also because participation is low, uneven and unequal.

There are also gaps and weaknesses in infrastructure, severe financial limitations

and less positive attitudes to learning that need to be overcome. There must be a sustained collective effort for the foreseeable future in order to raise overall participation in adult learning. At the same time, more emphasis needs to be placed

on raising participation in learning of underrepresented groups in order to ensure more equitable access to learning.

Hence, there is a need for effective partnerships, both strategic and operational, and for capacity-building measures.

Given current financial circumstances and capacity it is impossible for any of the countries or territories to put into place all the proposals in this document in the short

term. Building consensus and developing effective adult learning solutions take time. Partners need to make a commitment for the long term. Moreover, the needs, priorities and opportunities of countries and territories differ considerably. Priorities will need to be set by governments in consultation with partners, and action sequenced over the short, medium and long term.

To date, adult learning responses in the countries and territories have been uncoordinated, scattered and often driven by donors' objectives, with the result that

there are many learning needs that are not being met. Much more integration, coordination and complementary actions are needed. Hence, there is a need for a comprehensive adult learning policy framework endorsed by all the relevant ministries and stakeholders. Open dialogue, consultation and consensus-building are essential.

Traditional thinking and practice prevails. Adult learning is often equated with adult

education and seen as the main responsibility of ministries of education.

The standard response to second-chance education has been to offer to adults the same formal school-based learning opportunities that are provided for pupils and students, with minor adjustments.

Barriers to learning must be reduced and more emphasis given to incentives and rewards for learning. Much current provision is supply driven; there needs to be a major shift to the demand side to ensure that provision meets the needs of enterprises and individuals, and that it is market-oriented. There

is a need for capacity-building to change attitudes, ways of working and practices.

The starting point is not a vacuum, because a strong adult learning tradition existed in most South Eastern European countries and territories in the past. But adult learning declined as the economic and social situation deteriorated and war displaced normal life.

Adult education providers were starved of resources and learners. Although some parts can be renewed and transformed, developing work-related adult learning needs a major new push from governments, employers (including small enterprises), trade unions and providers.

The different types of skill that employers need, and trends in labor market skill needs, must inform the ongoing development of public and private training provision. Much better connections will have to be made between enterprises, the public employment service and providers.

Special programs for multi-disadvantaged people to ensure more equal access to appropriate learning will be needed. Promotional campaigns to encourage learning and to increase understanding of the importance and benefits of learning for individuals, employers and the country as a whole are important, but will need to be developed in parallel to the expansion and diversification of learning opportunities for adults and improvements in quality, responsiveness and outcomes of learning.

In terms of training for the unemployed, the main issues are to increase the numbers of

unemployed people who benefit and to help them back to work. This means providing sufficient funds for employment services to develop active labor market measures and related services. In addition, employment service

staff, or a specialized agency working closely with them, have to be able to assess fully the needs of unemployed people and provide appropriate counseling.

These services also need to be available to those who are not registered as unemployed but are without work or who are marginally employed, and, in the longer-term, potentially to all adults who need to use such services.

More mid to longer-term aims would include the modernization of public and private adult learning providers— including vocational schools, colleges and post-secondary institutions and people's universities — so as to make them more flexible in their response to the demand for new skills.

A key priority is the professional development of teachers and trainers. Private providers of learning need to be able to compete on an equal footing with public providers.

Finally, it seems desirable to further develop, with employers, a system of national qualifications, as well as the systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning programs to help ensure that they are meeting their objectives in a cost-effective manner.

Systemic reforms to continuing, labor market and basic life skills training.

Modernization of vocational curricula in line with labor market trends.

Incorporating broader occupational, key competences and basic foundation skills, advanced vocational training, modularization and methods of recognizing and validating prior learning and experience.

Vocational standards and national qualification frameworks: standards to steer curricula and syllabus design and implementation, national qualification frameworks, and certification awarded by independent qualification bodies.

Quality assurance embedded at every stage, i.e. inputs, process and outputs:licensing, accreditation of institutions and courses, monitoring learning processesand outcomes.

Systematic monitoring and evaluation of strategies, action plans, programs,courses: assessment of progress, performance and value for money againstidentified targets and milestones and as a steer for future action.

Initial and continuing professional development of directors, managers, trainers and other professionals, such as researchers and career advisors.

Responsiveness to the need for enterprises and individuals to develop and adapt skills: expansion of in-company learning, practical learning workshops, learning as part of a cluster activity, training needs analysis, learner-centered methodologies, customized products, short courses, short courses and customized advising and guidance.

Developing the training market:

expanding and diversifying formal and non-formal training opportunities, creating a level playing field for public and private providers, and developing flexible learning modes (e-learning, open and distance learning).

Development of more complex programs and parallel support services for disadvantaged segments of the population.

Steps that could be taken in the short term to build consensus and provide a basis for developing a comprehensive adult learning strategy and its subsequent implementation include:

- an agreement within government of a timetable for increased resources to be spent on education and learning, specifying the share to be allocated to adult learning (a unified government approach involving all the relevant ministries to develop integrated policy, comprehensive strategies and action

in adult learning, changes in governance to create a framework that empowers stakeholders and enables government to work in partnership with them, determining priorities with partners and leading on, for example, promoting adult learning, infrastructure developments, and special programs including joint ones);

- the establishment of a 'learning partnership' within government, bringing together relevant ministries and the various stakeholders with a view to considering the areas for priority action and funding in adult learning (making the connections:

Partnership working and networking across the spectrum of government–employment–learning–civil society at all levels to promote a culture of learning, raise awareness of the value of learning, increase participation in learning of all segments of the population, and develop the training market and lifelong educational infrastructure);

- the strengthening of the policy capacity of the lead ministry and other relevant ministries to develop a comprehensive strategy for adult learning in consultation with key stakeholders;

- the development of partnerships below national level (e.g. allocation of funds, definition of functions, membership, objectives). Maximizing public funding and co-funding of adult learning and establishing a sound financial basis for adult learning, pump-priming developments, optimizing public funding to lever in additional resources, trust funds directly to individuals/enterprises, and providing financial incentives and rewards;

- capacity-building for ministries, the social partners and other stakeholders to engage in effective partnerships, using international experience and donor

or expert assistance (Capacity building for partnerships across the board, for the social partners and other stakeholders, and for professionals providing training, advising and guidance and research services).

Further Research

Ten important issues need to be addressed if research on adult learning is to have been greatly influenced by how the education and training of adults are conducted. First, the interaction of emotion and cognition in adult learning needs much greater attention. Second, many more cross-cultural perspectives are needed to break the Eurocentric and North American dominance in research in adult learning and to understand inter-cultural differences in industrialized societies. Third, the predominant focus in studies of adult learning on instrumental skill development needs widening to encompass work on spiritual and significant personal learning and to understand the interconnections between these domains. Fourth, the growing recognition accorded to qualitative studies of adult learning should be solidified. Fifth, the links between adult learning and learning at other stages in the lifespan need much more attention. Sixth, much greater definitional clarity is needed when the term 'learning' is discussed, particularly whether it is being used as a noun or verb and whether it is referring to behavioral change or cognitive development (Brookfield, 1986). Seventh, adult learning needs to be understood much more as a socially embedded and socially constructed phenomenon (Jarvis, 1987). Eighth, the role played by gender in learning is as poorly understood in adulthood as it is at other stages in the lifespan. Ninth, a way should be found to grant greater credibility to adults' renderings of the experience of learning from the 'inside'. Tenth, research on adult

learning needs to be integrated much more strongly with research on adult development and adult cognition.

The quality of human and social capital is a key determinant of future economic growth,

wealth creation and social progress in any country. If no action is taken to raise overall

skill levels in the transition countries and territories in question, this is likely to be a

major constraint on productivity and competitiveness, but also on efforts to reduce poverty. While it is self-evident that improving skills across the board will not on its own solve chronic unemployment or reverse economic decline, investment in people's skills is a central part of integrated measures to tackle these problems.

The overall objectives of an adult learning strategy are to improve the competitiveness of the economy and the labor force by raising the average skill level of the workforce and making people more adaptable and able to accept and cope with change, as well as to promote the social aims of equity and participation.

These are general lifelong learning aims that relate to initial education and training and adult learning. They are also in line with the general objectives of the EU's economic and lifelong learning strategies.

In order to achieve these objectives and help overcome the difficulties in adult learning in South Eastern Europe, strategies will need to be based on a number of principles of good governance. These principles include a clear policy lead from government in adult learning; the sharing of responsibilities for policy and strategy formulation, action planning and implementation with

the social partners and other stakeholders; the adjustment of provision in terms of learning offers, modes and settings to suit learners' needs; a shift in balance to support employee development; and a rational financing system that achieves a balance between efficiency and equality objectives. Although adult learning is relatively new as field of study, it is just as substantial as traditional education and carries and potential for greater success.

